

A Guide to the Isle of Wight County (Va.) Marriage Register, 1772-1853

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A Collection in the Library of Virginia Barcode number 1104980/Isle of Wight County (Va.) Reel 43

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Title Statement

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Descriptive Summary

Collection numbers

Barcode number 1104980/Isle of Wight County (Va.) Reel 43

Language

English

Collector

Isle of Wight County (Va.) Circuit Court.

Physical Characteristics

1 v. (695 p.); 1 microfilm reel.

Location

State Records Center - Archives Annex, Library of Virginia

Repository

The Library of Virginia

Administrative Information

Access Restrictions

Volume is extremely fragile and is no longer available to the general public.

Use Restrictions

Use microfilm copy, Isle of Wight County (Va.) Reel 43.

Acquisition Information

This manuscript volume was compiled by the Virginia State Library's (now the Library of Virginia) Archives Division, under the accession number 20420, from the original marriage bonds and ministers' returns lent by the Isle of Wight's Circuit Court Clerk.

The microfilm copy of this volume, Reel 43, was generated by the Genealogical Society of Utah--while filming at the Virginia State Library.

Preferred Citation

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Adjunct Descriptive Data

Related Material

Additional Isle of Wight Marriage Records can be found on microfilm at the Library of Virginia. Consult ["A Guide to Virginia County and City Records on Microfilm."](#)

Historical Information

Isle of Wight was one of the original shires, or counties, first enumerated in 1634. Parts of Nansemond County were added in 1769 and 1772. The county was definitely named for the Isle of Wight (which means "channel" or island in the channel) and one of the first settlers in that county of Virginia was from the Isle of Wight in England, Sir Richard Worsley, and early patentee there. It was first known as Warrosquyoake for a tribe living in the area whose name means "swamp in a depression of land." The present name was given in 1637.

Prior to 1853, when the Commonwealth began recording vital statistics, Virginia marriages were recorded at the county or city level. Beginning in 1661, in order to be married by license, the groom was required to go before the county clerk and give bond with security that there was no lawful reason to prevent the marriage. The bond was pledged, with two or more sufficient securities (or witnesses), but no money was exchanged. The license, issued then by the clerk, was given to the minister who performed the service. The practice of bonding was discontinued in 1849, although in some communities bonds were pledged into the 1850s. This practice insured against legal action should the marriage not take place, if either party declined to go through with the union, or if one of the parties was found to be ineligible for marriage--if either the bride or groom was already married or was underage and lacked approval to wed.

Until 1780, marriages could be performed only by ministers of the Established Church, who were required by law to record marriages in the parish register. In 1780, dissenting ministers (only four per county from each sect) were first permitted to perform marriage ceremonies. In order to have a record of all marriages, ministers were required to sign a certificate to be filed with the county clerk. Initially, ministers sent marriage certificates to the clerk every three months. Some ministers adopted a custom of making collected returns--a list of marriages performed within a period of time such as a year or several years. Beginning in 1784, marriage certificates were returned annually. The law was rarely enforced, and ministers' returns were sometimes late, incorrect, incomplete, and in many instances, not made at all. County clerks compiled a register of marriages based, in part, on ministers' returns.

The original marriage bonds and ministers' returns, from which this volume was compiled, were created by the County Court.

Scope and Content

Isle of Wight County (Va.) Marriage Register, 1772-1853, is comprised of information extracted from the county's original marriage bonds and ministers' returns. This manuscript volume and accompanying typed index were both compiled from this information. The painstaking detail and amount work that went into the creation of this volume is worth noting--done during the Great Depression no less. The marriage bond information is divided into two sections encompassing pages 1-424 and 510-535. Printed forms were used to record the following information: date of marriage bond, the names of both parties, the name of the person responsible for the bond, the name of the parent/guardian present or giving consent and any additional witnesses. The intended groom's occupation, the bride's status at the time and the race of the couple are noted in parentheses. Chronological omissions are noted on pages 111, 115, 137, 270 and 424. Marriages between "free negroes" are noted from 1811-1852 on pages 111-423. Page 539 of the volume includes information copied from mutilated bonds (some without dates and a couple dating from 1799 and 1824.)

Ministers' returns, 1785-1853, are also divided into two sections. These returns are in the form of lists and are found on pages 431-509 and 536-539. The lists give the month, day, year of the marriage and the names of the parties. Interesting and rare to note are the marriages solemnized by the Society of People, more commonly known as the Quakers, found on page 432. As Friends' marriages were not regularly reported until around 1825, many such marriages appear only in Friends' records. A typed, numbered internal index A-Y, pages 1-156, follows these compilations. All entries are alphabetical by surname (both bride and groom.) Originally, the index was found at the beginning of volume (as the microfilm notes) but when rebound in 1955, the index was moved to the end of the volume.

Index Terms

Corporate Names:

Isle of Wight County (Va.) Circuit Court.

Subjects:

Christian sects--Virginia--Isle of Wight County.

Clergy--Virginia--Isle of Wight County.

Free African Americans--Marriage--Virginia--Isle of Wight County.

Free African Americans--Virginia--Isle of Wight County.

Marriage--Virginia--Isle of Wight County.

Society of Friends--Marriage--Virginia--Isle of Wight County.

Society of Friends--Virginia--Isle of Wight County.

Geographical Names:

Isle of Wight County (Va.)--History.

Genre and Form Terms:

Local government records--Virginia--Isle of Wight County.

Marriage records--Virginia--Isle of Wight County.

Marriage registers--Virginia--Isle of Wight County.

Added Entry - Corporate Name:

Isle of Wight County (Va.) County Court.

Arrangement

Arranged chronologically except as noted.